

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting  
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Monday, October 24, 2017  
8:30 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge  
**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston  
**Katherine Craven**, Brookline  
**Ed Doherty**, Boston  
**Amanda Fernandez**, Belmont  
**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke  
**James Peyser**, Secretary of Education  
**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington  
**Hannah Trimarchi**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Marblehead  
**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeff Wulfson**, Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

**Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:**

**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

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Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and the members introduced themselves. Acting Commissioner Wulfson informed the Board that the Department continues to work on contingency planning for the possible arrival of students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including possible ways to assist districts. He said Helene Bettencourt, Chief of Staff, is representing the Department on the response team headed up by the Governor's office and in coordination with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). Acting Commissioner Wulfson said so far several hundred students have arrived and the numbers may increase as transportation from the islands becomes more available. He said the Department may have some federal McKinney-Vento funds to assist districts and we are in discussions as to whether supplemental education appropriations are needed.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Department is working on the revisions to the history and social science curriculum framework and he will bring the draft to the Board later this school year. He added that the Department is in touch with a legislative working group on civics education and will make them aware of our effort. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Department is also working with stakeholders and experts on computer science and possible incentives to schools to increase their offerings, which will likely be a topic of conversation in the Board's joint meeting with the Board of Higher Education in January.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Department will be posting updated guidelines on implementing social and emotional learning curriculum, originally developed as a result of the 2010 anti-bullying act. He updated the Board on the lawsuit brought by a group of parents against the Holyoke Public Schools and the Department regarding provision of translations and interpretive services in special education cases, noting the parties in the case provided a status report to the court early this month and indicated broad areas of agreement, which means that the case may be able to be resolved without a preliminary injunction. That hearing has been postponed and a further status report will be filed with the court on November 13.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Office of the State Auditor recently issued an opinion, in response to a request filed by the Framingham School Committee, that the state educator evaluation system is not an unfunded mandate. He added that the Auditor recommended that the Executive Office of Administration & Finance and the Department should work together under a provision of state law to develop guidelines for reimbursement if the Legislature chooses to fund an appropriation for that program. Acting Commissioner Wulfson also directed the Board to the memo in their briefing books that provides an update on school breakfast programs.

Ms. Craven and Mr. Moriarty arrived at 8:40 a.m.

### **Statements from the Public**

1. **Katherina Elbert**, parent, addressed the Board on candidate qualifications for the new Commissioner.
2. **Gerry Mroz**, parent, addressed the Board on candidate qualifications for the new Commissioner.
3. **Laura Trendel**, parent, addressed the Board on candidate qualifications for the new Commissioner.
4. **Jay Gonzales**, candidate for Governor, addressed the Board on the 2016 charter school ballot campaign.

### **Approval of Minutes**

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:       that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approves the minutes of the September 26, 2017 Regular Meeting.**

The vote was unanimous.

### **Election of Board Vice-Chair**

Chair Sagan called for nominations for Vice-Chair. Ms. Craven nominated Mr. Morton. Ms. Craven said his years of service on the Board and to the children of Springfield and Boston exhibit his dedication. Mr. Doherty seconded the nomination.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education elect James Morton to serve as Vice-Chair of the Board, in accordance with Article I of the By-Laws.**

The vote was unanimous. Mr. Morton accepted. Chair Sagan said the Board greatly appreciates Vice-Chair Morton's service.

### **Update on Commissioner Search**

Chair Sagan introduced Ms. Rosa Morris from the search firm Korn Ferry who will be assisting the Board with the commissioner search. Chair Sagan said much progress has been made and an email box has been created for the public to submit input which will go to the search firm for their review. Ms. Morris said she will serve as principal consultant; she has already spoken to members individually and will be speaking to senior staff and additional stakeholders. Chair Sagan handed out a draft job description, both short and long version, to review. He invited comments. Vice-Chair Morton said he is pleased the description states that the commissioner would serve "all" students. Ms. Fernandez suggested the characteristics should include building collaboration across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic lines. Chair Sagan asked members to send any additional comments by the end of the week.

Ms. Morris said December 15, 2017 will be the deadline for candidates to apply. She said the preliminary selection committee will meet at least twice to review all submitted applications. Chair Sagan said Board members should consider "homework assignments" for the finalists.

Chair Sagan announced the members of the preliminary selection committee, which includes voting members and non-voting members:

#### **Voting members:**

**Paul Sagan**, Chairman of the Board Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE);

**Jim Peyser**, Secretary, Executive Office of Education;

**James Morton**, Vice-Chair of BESE;

**Margaret McKenna**, BESE member; and

**Katherine Craven**, BESE member.

#### **Non-voting members:**

**Vanessa Calderón-Rosado**, CEO, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción; former member, BESE;

**Sydney Chaffee**, 2017 National Teacher of the Year; Teacher, Codman Academy Public Charter School;

**Alex Cortez**, Managing Partner, Reimagine School Systems Fund, New Profit; board member, Match Education and Innovate Public Schools;

**Paul Dakin**, Former Superintendent, Revere Public Schools, retired;

**Marcia Faucher**, Adjunct Professor, Roger Williams University; former principal, New Bedford Public Schools;

**Robert Gittens**, Executive Director, Cambridge Family & Children Services; former member, Boston School Committee; former Vice President for Public Affairs, Northeastern University;

**Sheila Harrity**, Superintendent-Director, Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District; Vice Chair, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education; former principal, Worcester Technical High School;

**Matt Hills**, Member, Newton School Committee;

**Beverly Holmes**, Member, Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership Board; former member, BESE;

**Linda Noonan**, Executive Director, Mass. Business Alliance for Education; and

**Mary Walachy**, Executive Director, Davis Foundation; Member, Mass. Board of Early Education and Care.

Chair Sagan said it is an excellent group of people who understand the need for confidentiality and he is grateful for their willingness to serve. He added that he has asked the committee to be available to meet for extra sessions in December and January and he hopes to have the finalist interviews in January. Chair Sagan thanked Ms. Morris for the update and said the Board will look forward to hearing from her monthly.

### **Recap of October 23, 2017 Special Meeting**

Chair Sagan asked Acting Commissioner Wulfson to recap the discussion from the special meeting last night. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Board reviewed the first administration of the next-generation MCAS and the test administration was extremely successful. The Board also reviewed student results, which were provided last week and have been posted on the Department's website. Acting Commissioner Wulfson explained the student and parent reports will be delivered today and parents will receive material explaining the results. The Acting Commissioner noted that the results reflect our rigorous standards and are designed to signal readiness for academic success. He added this is a single data point, not comparable to previous MCAS tests, and it is a solid baseline for tracking future performance.

Acting Commission Wulfson explained that this is a transition year for the accountability system and most schools will not receive an accountability level. He said seven high schools were named commendation schools this year, and Randolph Public Schools exited from Level 4 status, thanks to Superintendent Anderson and the school community having demonstrated consistent improvement in student performance. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the existing Level 4 schools remain in that status because we need to see sustained progress over time, and some will be in good position to exit Level 4 next year if they continue making progress. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said we need to stay the course with the Level 5 schools and districts. He added that as Commissioner Chester reminded us, our goal when placing schools or districts in Level 5 receivership is not how fast we can get in and out but to make sure the improvement is solid and lasting.

Mr. Doherty said he found the presentation last night comprehensive and quite dense. He said he hopes that as we change standards and tests, we make sure the standards are attainable and the student test scores are not used to label schools as failing. Mr. Doherty said we need to encourage well qualified and hardworking teachers to teach in challenging schools and he hopes we can use test scores and results to identify problems and craft support, encouragement, and extra resources for schools not doing as well as we would like them to do.

Vice-Chair Morton called for a ten-minute break at 9:30 a.m. Chair Sagan reconvened the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

### **Update on Interim Standard for Competency Determination for the Classes of 2021 and 2022**

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel and Lucy Wall, Associate General Counsel to outline the approach for establishing the interim standard for the high school competency determination (CD) on the next-generation high school test which is now under development for ELA and Math. The Acting Commissioner said it will be field tested this spring in high schools throughout the state and will be administered for the first time in the spring of 2019. He added that the first class affected will be the class of 2021. The Board has the responsibility of determining the cut scores to qualify for the high school diploma, while the Commissioner determines cut scores for grades 3-8. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said any new high school cut score will be decided after engaging stakeholders, superintendents, principals, guidance counselors, parent groups, and the State Student Advisory Council (SSAC), and will provide ample notice to students and schools. In the meantime, to ensure fairness during this transition period, Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he is proposing that the first two classes that take the test – the classes of 2021 and 2022 – be held harmless by means of an interim CD standard commensurate to the current passing score on the legacy MCAS test.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he expects to propose in November that the Board amend the CD regulations to include the interim standard for the classes of 2021 and 2022. He plans to recommend that the Board invite public comment on the proposed regulations, as required by the Administrative Procedure Act, after which he would bring them back to the Board with any recommendations and changes for formal adoption. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he wanted to send a clear message at this month's meeting that this proposal will be before the Board, because 9<sup>th</sup> graders (the class of 2021) are getting their scores on the grade 8 next-generation MCAS tests this week.

Vice-Chair Morton said he agrees with the proposal. Mr. West said the basic logic makes sense and suggested further explanation of the method to equate the passing rate through two different assessments. Ms. Stapel explained that the technical advisory committee is scheduled to meet this week and will have more details but we are aiming to provide two ways: an equi-percentile linking the two tests, and a way to qualitatively validate that through the standard setting process.

Vice-Chair Morton said this is a great opportunity to learn from past experience and is similar to the way the original CD standard was implemented over time with notice to students and schools. Ms. Trimarchi asked what language in the regulation needs to be updated. Ms. Stapel explained that the current language is specifically worded to the legacy MCAS achievement levels and scaled scores so that would be updated to set the interim standard. Mr. Moriarty said he is fully in support of this but it is important to remind the public this is transitional and the goal is to move to a high school diploma that is a genuine indicator of college and career readiness. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the messaging for the class of 2023 and beyond will put them on notice that the Board will be considering raising the bar.

## **Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY19 Budget Proposal and Report from the Board's Budget Committee**

Acting Commissioner Wulfson informed the Board that we are starting work with the Board's Budget Committee on the budget priorities for FY19, which begins on July 1, and the Board will make recommendations to the Secretary for the Governor. Bill Bell, Senior Associate Commissioner, explained that the Department is implementing the FY18 spending plan and an additional \$4.1 million for the Student Assessment account has been authorized and approved by the Governor. Mr. Bell noted we are in a constricted revenue environment.

Ms. Craven reported on behalf of the Budget Committee. She said the general fiscal climate is similar to last year and the committee discussed the importance of developing a partnership with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to address students' non-academic education needs and pool resources, which may result in a better outcome financially for some districts. Secretary Peyser echoed the importance of creating partnerships to make it easier for families to access services. He added that the opioid crisis is another issue that is facing students and their families and intersects with challenges in schools. Secretary Peyser said we should seek to address these needs through better coordination with other agencies.

Ms. Craven noted Mr. Moriarty's comments about Holyoke receiving more students from Puerto Rico than even the city of Boston and said it is interesting to see the pockets of needs throughout the Commonwealth. She said the committee's initial meeting just set the stage for possible budget recommendations. Ms. Craven added that another item that was discussed was a retained revenue account for educator licensure. Acting Commissioner Wulfson added that this item fits into a topic later on the agenda – the Office of Professional Practices Investigations (OPPI). He said our educator licensure office is basically funded through teacher licensing fees which have not been raised in 20 years and while we are always reluctant to increase fees, those are important functions that we need to do well so it is a topic under discussion for this budget cycle.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he is concerned about the Department's capacity to undertake all of the work we are doing as well as new responsibilities that keep getting added, including the work with Level 5 schools and districts, OPPI, and so on. He added that we are working within a very constrained FTE cap and our ability to hire additional staff is almost non-existent. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted that many programs funded by the Legislature to the districts come with no money for administration by the Department.

Ms. Stewart commented that districts, educators, and the Department all need additional resources. Chair Sagan thanked the Administration for the additional money for assessment and added that Commissioner Chester took the budget crisis to heart and restructured the Department and management, but we have to consider how to address the Department's needs.

### **Level 5 Schools: First Quarter Update**

Chair Sagan introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner and Ventura Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Strategic Transformation, to provide the first quarterly update on the Level 5 schools.

Mr. Rodriguez explained the support the Department provides to Level 5 schools and districts, including a liaison from the Department who helps coordinate the support and monitor implementation of the turnaround plans. He added we have the Level 5 receivers complete a quarterly update and also the Department does two monitoring site visits with one of our partners, American Institute of Research, including visits to classrooms. Mr. Rodriguez explained that the receivers received the results of the next-generation MCAS tests about a week ago and are analyzing the results. Mr. Rodriguez said the Department is also reviewing the data and information from monitoring site visits to see if we have what we need to understand current performance and make adjustments if needed.

Mr. Rodriguez said that Level 5 schools and districts used professional development time prior before the start of the school year to focus on school culture, teaching and learning, and refining the systems. He noted that staffing is a continuing challenge and despite best efforts, staff resignations in late August are particularly troublesome. Mr. Rodriguez said some schools, such as UP Academy Holland, are developing a deeper bench through teaching fellows. He added we are four years in and have seen some schools make a lot of process.

Mr. Moriarty said staffing clearly is an issue in the report and he found the August resignations extremely troublesome and too commonplace in urban districts and Level 4 schools. He noted school committees have to abide by a June 15 deadline to notify teachers. Mr. Moriarty said he believes it is unethical for an educator to leave in August except for very serious personal reasons, and suggested there should be some significant disincentive for this behavior.

Mr. Johnston said the Board will be hearing from the receivers from Level 5 schools and districts over the course of the year and today, he is presenting as the interim receiver in Southbridge. Mr. Johnston said the strategy was to start the school year strong and have the schools ready to welcome the students back. He briefed the Board on the receiver search and said we are fortunate to have funding through Chiefs for Change to have a consultant assist with the search and find out from the community the characteristics they would like to see in the next receiver. Mr. Johnston said they identified four key characteristics: community building; integrity, resourcefulness, and shared vision. He said the job was posted last week and he hopes to have interviews set up in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Johnston said by late November/early December we should have a sense of the strong candidates and the choice of the new receiver will be up to Acting Commissioner Wulfson.

Chair Sagan thanked Mr. Johnston for both the update and his double duty and offered the Board's support. Ms. Trimarchi asked if we provide a channel of communication and support among the Level 5 schools. Mr. Johnston said the Department created a professional learning community among the Level 5 receivers and they have all visited each other's schools, held common theme meetings, and also work and meet with the Urban Superintendents Network.

### **Report on Educator License Actions**

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced the next item, a report to the Board on educator license actions and the work of the Department's Office of Professional Practice Investigations

(OPPI). He said the Department licenses some 90,000 teachers and administrators who work in our schools and with any licensing agency comes the responsibility to investigate allegations of misdeeds or misconduct and determine whether licensure sanctions are necessary. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted this is critically important work that rarely gets public attention, which is a good thing because it means our staff is doing their job well. He said this work is fundamental to protecting the health and safety of students.

Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel; Quinton Dale, Chief of Investigations; and Cathleen Cavell, Legal Counsel, to provide an overview of OPPI's work. He said as the Board hears about OPPI, it is important to remember that 99.9 percent of those 90,000+ educators are caring, hard-working, and trustworthy individuals and the Acting Commissioner does not want anything said here today to be interpreted otherwise.

Ms. Schneider noted that in June, when the Board amended the educator licensure regulations, Mr. Moriarty expressed interest in learning more about this aspect of our practice. Ms. Schneider explained that OPPI investigates allegations that a licensed educator is unfit. She said OPPI is staffed by two full-time lawyers, one part-time lawyer, a chief of investigations, and two investigators. In response to a question from Chair Sagan, Ms. Schneider said OPPI reports through a Deputy General Counsel to the General Counsel and the Commissioner. Ms. Schneider introduced Mr. Dale and Ms. Cavell. Ms. Schneider reviewed the mission statement of OPPI which includes the following: protect students from potentially harmful educators; maintain the integrity of the education profession; provide due process to licensed educators who are alleged to have committed misconduct; and preserve high quality standards for 96,000 MA licensed educators. Ms. Schneider explained that they work closely with the Instructional Leadership team that Heather Peske leads and with the Office of Educator Licensure, led by Brian Devine.

Ms. Schneider explained that the legal framework is set forth in the Board's regulations and noted the applicable regulations are in the materials that were provided. Mr. Dale said most reports to the Department come from school district administrators; others who report include law enforcement, parents, other licensees, and the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Ms. Schneider said about ten years ago the Board added to the regulations a requirement that when a school administrator, principal, or superintendent dismisses, receives a resignation, or declines to renew the employment of educator for any reasons that might implicate that educator's license, they are required to report to the Commissioner and this is our largest source of reports. Mr. West asked in cases that are being investigated, will educators still be employed as that process unfolds. Mr. Dale explained that it depends on the facts of the case. If the district has become aware of misconduct it typically takes an employment action and puts the educator out on administrative leave. Mr. West asked what mechanism is there to inform a district of an investigation, and how do we balance that with the due process rights of the teacher. Ms. Schneider said that is a balancing test in every case.

Ms. Cavell added that if there is a media report about an incident, OPPI will open a file; the district sees the media report as well, so if the person presents a danger the district likely has placed the employee on administrative leave before we ask the district for more information. Ms. Cavell added that conduct that may produce employment consequences may not necessarily require or even warrant any sort of license action. She noted your license is your profession, your



ability to practice your profession; you may not fit into the culture of a school or may have other problems in your employment but that does not necessarily mean you do not deserve to hold the educator license that you earned. Mr. Dale explained that districts have 30 days to report, although we may find out sooner from a news report or a law enforcement agency and contact the district.

Mr. Dale reviewed the issues that OPPI investigates, which include boundary issues such as improper touching or having sex with a student. In response to a question from Chair Sagan, Ms. Cavell added that boundary violations may include inappropriate communication, which is why we discuss professional boundaries. Chair Sagan asked if our purview includes adult-to-adult issues. Ms. Cavell said in some cases it does. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted that occasionally an overzealous teacher wants to be friends with the students and this can go down an inappropriate path. In response to a comment from Chair Sagan, Mr. Dale said the misconduct could be sexual or physical or emotional or any combination thereof. Mr. Dale continued that OPPI also investigates allegations of educators involved in MCAS cheating, criminal conduct that happened outside the school, inappropriate communications, and substance abuse.

Ms. Trimarchi asked whether there have been updates to standards relative to social media. Mr. Dale explained that most districts have a policy about communication with students and said OPPI sees a lot of instances involving social media. Chair Sagan asked if there is a suggested framework or minimum standard we could recommend. Ms. Cavell said we refer school and district leaders to standards and model policies that districts have adopted. Acting Commissioner Wulfson stated he believes the MASC has model policies that school committees can adopt regarding social media use by faculty and administrators. Chair Sagan suggested that if any districts are ignoring this, we should make clear that these issues need to be non-negotiable. Ms. Cavell said often the social media policies are there and someone's conduct has violated the policies but more importantly has violated the sense of well-being and safety. Chair Sagan noted it starts with the tone from the top and we need to say here is our standard and make sure everyone is setting the right tone.

Ms. Stewart said Board members take an ethics training and wondered if there should be something similar in the licensure renewal process. Chair Sagan said we should not be redundant with local training and we do not do the hiring and firing. Mr. Moriarty said substance abuse can be a broad topic so is the line crossed when it impairs job performance only as opposed to when it is an illegal substance that results in criminal conduct. Ms. Cavell said alcohol and illegal drugs can all be factors and that on occasion we impose a limitation that, for example, requires that an educator with a substance abuse history agree never to transport students. She added that the regulations require licensed educators to report criminal convictions.

Ms. Stewart asked do you have enough resources, how many people are working on this, and what might your needs be. She asked how OPPI prioritizes the work with such a small team. Ms. Schneider explained as the memo stated we have two full-time lawyers and one part-time lawyer who major in this work, our chief of investigations, and two investigators – and 96,000 licensed educators, most of whom are honorable, upstanding people. Mr. Dale added OPPI also relies heavily on our office manager who receives all of the reports, prepares files for review, and flags files with egregious offenses and places them in the priority file. He added that the team

prioritizes by addressing first the educators who put the students most at risk or harm. Ms. Schneider said that with additional resources, OPPI could do more and do it more expeditiously. Chair Sagan asked if children at undue risk. Acting Commissioner Wulfson explained that we have a backlog and always worry that somewhere in that backlog is a case we did not spot and move to the front. Chair Sagan said you need to come back to us and tell us where you are short-staffed; this cannot get lost in the budget process. He added this has to come to this Board and it is our responsibility to know. Chair Sagan said he would like a follow-up to help the Board understand the backlog, how has it changed, and where do you see risk. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said he welcomes the Board's involvement and support in efforts to get those resources.

Ms. Fernandez asked about open investigations. Mr. West noted there are 326 open investigations. Mr. Dale explained that when OPPI receives a report involving an allegation or separation from employment, we open an investigation and prioritize it first to those who are putting students at risk. He added the educators have due process rights so it is difficult to put a timetable on how long the investigations last. Mr. Dale said when a sanction on a case is issued it is reported to a national clearinghouse and we utilize the clearinghouse to watch for educators coming from other states.

Ms. Schneider reviewed the steps new applicants for licensure must take. Mr. Dale explained applicant investigations which total about 800 each year; they are reviewed for severity of offense and we will deny a license if the person is not fit to be an educator. Ms. Schneider added that an applicant does not have the due process rights that a license holder has. She said OPPI has an increased volume of cases because state law has caught up and now requires national criminal background checks by the hiring authority. Ms. Cavell provided the Board with an overview on laws pertaining to background and fingerprint based checks and explained that criminal records checks for school employees are much more complete than they were three or four years ago. She added that a lot of the serious misconduct OPPI investigates is committed by people with no criminal record.

Chair Sagan thanked the staff for their presentation and said they have a non-voluntary invitation to come back to discuss the backlog and resources so the Board understands the situation. The Chair thanked the team for the report and the work they do on behalf of students.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:       that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 11:10 a.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeff Wulfson  
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education  
and Secretary to the Board

**Minutes of the Special Meeting  
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Monday, October 23, 2017  
5:00 p.m.—6:50 p.m.  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge  
**James Morton**, Vice Chair, Boston  
**Ed Doherty**, Boston  
**Amanda Fernandez**, Belmont  
**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke  
**James Peyser**, Secretary of Education  
**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington  
**Hannah Trimarchi**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Marblehead  
**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeff Wulfson**, Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:**

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline  
**Margaret McKenna**, Boston

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Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and asked the members to introduce themselves. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said this is the annual discussion about student performance on MCAS. He commended the work of Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel, Chief MCAS Analyst Bob Lee, and the Department's entire Student Assessment team in carrying out the Board's November 2015 decision to create and implement the next generation MCAS tests by spring 2017. The Acting Commissioner noted that some were skeptical the Department could meet the ambitious deadline. He said the Student Assessment team deserves great credit for managing the smooth transition to the new tests.

Ms. Stapel thanked the Acting Commissioner and the Board for their support and acknowledged the assistance provided by the information technology and data teams. Ms. Stapel went through the presentation on the 2017 next generation MCAS. She noted that in spring 2017, 60 percent of all grades 3-8 students, and 93 percent of students in grades 4 and 8, took the test on computers. In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Lee said there was little variance in results between computer-based and paper testing. Acting Commissioner Wulfson gave credit to the field, Mass IT, and the Department for accomplishing the goal of computer-based testing in grades 4 and 8 and beyond, and noted the initiatives by the Governor and Mass IT to strengthen wifi connections in western Massachusetts.

Ms Stapel reviewed MCAS participation rates and key points relating to the next generation

MCAS, including higher, but achievable standards; educator participation and involvement; coherence across grade spans; and alignment to readiness at the next level. She explained that the next-generation results cannot be directly compared to results on the legacy MCAS tests.

Mr. Lee discussed data on baseline readiness for the next level (Class of 2013) and noted that statewide, 62 percent enrolled in college that fall with 54 percent persistently enrolled in college. Mr. Lee added that we would like to see that number increase. Secretary Peyser added that the completion rate over a six-year period falls to around 50 percent. In response to a question from Ms. Stewart, Secretary Peyser said that higher education is moving away from the Accuplacer college placement tests. Mr. West said that is a positive development and better approaches should be explored.

Ms. Stapel and Mr. Lee reviewed the results of the MCAS legacy tests in science and technology/engineering and at the high school level, the 2017 statewide MCAS results for the class of 2019, and the 2017 next-generation state results. Acting Commissioner Wulfson explained that the results have changed not because students did worse but because we have increased the expectations. Ms. Stapel said our test results are more aligned now with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, and on NAEP Massachusetts is either ranked number one or tied for first. Mr. West noted research that shows proficiency on NAEP is well aligned with college readiness. Mr. Lee reviewed the results by student demographic groups. Ms. Stewart asked about the school climate survey. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Department will release the results of this first-time survey next month.

Ms. Stapel discussed the resources and information that the Department will post on a rolling basis. Ms. Trimarchi asked about resources to explain the results to students. Ms. Stapel said the Department is working on this. Acting Commissioner Wulfson invited the State Student Advisory Council to participate. Ms. Stapel said we are doing more outreach to parents and various resources are available in multiple languages. Mr. Morton expressed concern about the third-grade results. The Acting Commissioner said while the test and scoring scale are new, the third-grade results do highlight our mission. Mr. Doherty asked if any patterns or findings stood out. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said Mr. Doherty's question will lead us into the next presentation. Mr. Moriarty said he is pleased the standard has not been watered down and he continues to be concerned about the ELA third-grade results. Secretary Peyser said a year and a half ago we started this process with healthy skepticism and he thanked Ms. Stapel, Mr. Lee, and the entire assessment team for the smooth administration on a complicated matter. Chair Sagan concurred.

Chair Sagan called for a break at 6:00 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 6:10 p.m. Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, and Rob Curtin, Associate Commissioner, to provide an overview of the 2017 district and school accountability determinations, including assessment and accountability results for Level 5 schools and districts. The Acting Commissioner noted this is a transitional year for the school and district accountability system, and he will come back to the Board over the next several months to discuss possible changes to the accountability system.

Mr. Curtin reviewed the current framework for district and school accountability and assistance

~~and noted the Board approved an amendment to the regulations in April 2017 which allowed the Department to refrain from placing certain schools into Levels 1-3 at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year. He added that it applies to one year only, affects schools serving grades 3-8 that administered the next-generation MCAS tests in 2017, and does not affect high schools serving grades 9-12. Mr. Curtin said the Department did not identify any new Level 4 or Level 5 schools serving grades 3-8 in 2017. He reviewed the 2016 and 2017 district levels and the accountability levels for high schools that administered the legacy MCAS tests.~~

~~Mr. Curtin informed the Board that seven high schools received commendations and three additional schools were blue ribbon recipients. Mr. Curtin said the Acting Commissioner has removed the Randolph Public Schools from Level 4 status. Mr. Curtin commended Superintendent Anderson and the school community on the improved student performance and governance. The Acting Commissioner said he has not placed or exited any additional Level 4 districts or schools, anticipating that the accountability system will be updated later this year and some schools may be eligible next year.~~

~~Mr. Johnston provided an overview of the results from the four Level 5 schools and three Level 5 districts. Mr. Johnston noted volatility in math results at the Morgan School in Holyoke. Mr. Moriarty commented on the variance in outcomes grade by grade. Mr. Johnston said Receiver Zrike is taking that under consideration. Mr. Johnston went over the results from the Parker School in New Bedford, UP Academy Holland in Boston and the Dever School in Boston.~~

~~Mr. Johnston provided a brief overview of results from the three Level 5 districts, noting that Lawrence continues to show signs of steady growth and continued development. He said Southbridge is only in the first year of its turnaround plan and has room to improve. Mr. Johnston said in Holyoke there are concerns about progress at the high school level and elsewhere, and the district is taking steps including engaging in a high school redesign for next year. He said Receiver Zrike will update the Board in the coming months. Mr. Moriarty said the community needs the Holyoke turnaround plan to succeed. Acting Commissioner Wulfson noted turnaround is more challenging at the high school level than at earlier grades.~~

~~Chair Sagan thanked the panelists.~~

~~**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**~~

~~**VOTED: —that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**~~

~~The vote was unanimous.~~

~~Respectfully submitted,  
Jeff Wulfson  
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education  
and Secretary to the Board~~